Appl. No.: 10/560,391
Amdt. Dated March 19, 2010
Reply to Office Action Mail-Dated April 6, 2009

Amendments to the Claims:

This list of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application:

Listing of the Claims:

Please amend the claims as follows without prejudice. No new matter has been added by way of these amendments.

Claims 1-32 (Canceled)

33 (Currently Amended) A drilling tool including a drill shaft for transmitting axial load, said drill shaft comprising a series of coaxial ring members connected together such that adjacent ring members are flexible in an axial plane relative to each other; wherein:

-   each ring member connects to an adjacent ring member by a connecting member arranged to transmit torque therebetween;

-   a plurality of axial supports extend between adjacent ring members so as to transmit axial loads therebetween;

-   the connecting member and axial supports allow adjacent ring members so as to transmit axial loads therebetween; and

-   the connecting member and axial support comprise separate physical structures;;

-   the axial support comprises at least two axial links extending between circumferentially aligned points on adjacent ring members;; and

-    the connecting member comprises pairs of links extending between a plurality of connection points on one ring member to a plurality of connection points on an adjacent ring member circumferentially offset by up to 90°, such that each connection point is connected by a pair of inclined links to the adjacent ring.

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34 (Previously Presented) A drilling tool as claimed in claim 33, wherein each axial link is connected at one end to one of the ring members, and at the other end is separated from the other ring member by a small distance such that when an axial compressive load is applied to the tool, the axial link is contacted by the other ring member.

Claims 35-38 (Canceled)

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